The Early Years Special Educational Needs Service

Celebratory Checkpoints: steps to success for children with SEND

Introduction

The over-riding principles of the new 'development matters' support the need for increased adult child interaction, reflect the importance of communication and language and have at their heart a desire to ensure all children receive high quality care. A further intent is that the gap between the disadvantaged and their peers reduces. Over recent years evidence has shown whilst children in the early years have been making progress, the gap between the disadvantaged and their peers remains consistent.

The first months and years of a child's life set the stage for lifelong learning and development. Most children will make progress within developmental norms and the development matters **checkpoints** support practitioners with monitoring this.

However, for those children not making progress within developmental norms the SEN Code of Practice 2015 requires that schools and settings approach the needs of children with special educational needs using a 'graduated response.' When considering that, the graduated response talks about the need to:

- identify barriers to learning
- set outcomes
- measure progress against outcomes as part of the assess, plan, do, review model.

This can appear counter intuitive to the ethos of the reforms. However, it is essential that children with SEND continue to be assessed in a way that is 'useful', 'time efficient' and meets the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice. (See later section on the graduated response in more detail).

With the removal of the ages and stages it may be harder to evidence progress or provide evidence for additional resources or as part of the requirements of the graduated response whilst adhering to the SEN Code of Practice.

Birth to 3 is a crucial time for development. Throughout this stage children who are developing at different rates may take longer to show progress between the checkpoints. A child with significant developmental delay may take months or years to move through the developmental checkpoints.

Ages and stages have been replaced by 3 developmental pathways. When considering this in the context of children with SEND, the Birth to 3 pathway is vast and potentially leaves a massive assessment void for SEND practitioners. Many children with SEND rely on smaller steps of measurable progress. The checkpoints will help significantly but for children with complex SEND the celebratory checkpoints have been developed to help practitioners ask

smaller step questions as part of the progress conversation.

The **celebratory checkpoints** have been devised by Derbyshire Early Years SEN team for use with young children who have significant barriers to learning. Through the celebratory checkpoints it is hoped the progress of all children can be celebrated.

The celebratory checkpoints are central within the document but are surrounded by the foundational skills that underpin learning and development. Here is an example of the communication and language birth to 3 profile:

The Derbyshire Early Years SEN Service – Celebratory Checkpoints. Birth to 3

When considering to what extent these aspects of development are being observed and supported, we should always have in mind the aspects of foundational learning that accompany and underpin the play and interaction we see.

Executive function includes the child's ability to, hold information in mind, focus their attention, think flexibly, inhibit impulsive behaviour. These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to **self-regulate**, concentrate their thinking, plan what to do next, monitor what they are doing and adapt, regulate strong feelings, be patient for what they want and bounce back when things get difficult. **Language development** is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

The 7 C's of resilience.	Communication and Language Small Step Celebratory Checkpoints *(including DM checkpoints)*	Foundational skills Characteristics of Effective Learning
Competence I can achieve and make progress, **Confidence** I have a go and keep on trying **Connection** I feel safe and secure in my relationships; I know who will support me and who I can ask for help **Character** I have a unique personality, interests, and strengths	♫ *Is the baby using speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults?* ♫ Does the child make fleeting eye contact with an adult who is talking or turn head towards a sound and locate with accuracy? ♫ Does the child watch and follow adult movements, copy and imitate for example smile in response to a smiling adult or *in response to recognisable playthings* or imitate sticking tongue out? ♫ Does the child stop crying in response to a soothing voice, stop and still on hearing their name? ♫ Does the child communicate need (e.g hungry) and feelings (e.g uncomfortable or annoyed) in a variety of ways including babbling, crying, squealing, and gurgling, or vocalise more when adult uses child directed speech? ♫ *Around 6 months does the baby respond to familiar voices, turn to their own name and 'take turns' in conversations with babbling?* ♫ Does the child respond to action rhymes such as round the garden or show a preference for some sounds and dislike of others? ♫ Does the child begin to associate meaning or show anticipation of activities with aid of objects of reference or cry to protest the end of an activity? ♫ Does the child explore with a strong sense of impulse, hand familiar items to adult on request and clearly demonstrate the desire for more of an activity? ♫ Does the child gesture no or still or stop what they are doing when adult shakes head and says "no" in exaggerated voice? ♫ *Around 12 months, does the baby take turns by babbling and using single words? Does the baby point to things and use gesture to show things to adults and share interests?*	Playing and exploring – I realise that my actions have an effect on the world, so I repeat them. I reach for and accept objects, making choices and exploring different resources and materials. I plan and think ahead about how to explore or play with objects. I guide my own thinking and actions by talking to myself while playing. I make independent choices and do things independently that I have been previously taught. I can collaborate and learn alongside my peers.

Foundational Learning Themes

The foundational learning themes underpin and support a child's ability to learn. They have been described as 'the learning to learn skills', 'the foundational skills', and in the context of the celebratory checkpoints include:

- the characteristics of effective learning
- the 7 Cs of resilience
- the Leuven scales of engagement
- executive function and self-regulation.

These foundational themes run parallel and are ongoing throughout the celebratory checkpoints. They are the foundation on which learning and knowledge are built.

As an example: being resilient and persisting. Consider a baby transferring a dummy from hand to mouth, the toddler who pulls to stand again and again when dropping back to their bottom, the child who turns a simple wooden shape to make it fit in the inset puzzle, the child who controls a wobble and lifts their feet from the floor to balance on a balance bike. These are all aspects of the same intrinsic skills of persisting, being resilient, having a go, and bouncing back but, all are different and yet the same.

Characteristics of effective teaching and learning (playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically)
The characteristics have lifelong impact. For children with SEND these characteristics, skills and strategies are just as much a part of learning but sometimes are in themselves a barrier to how children with SEND access and engage with both the environment and others. Often, they need to be seen and supported in different ways and will develop at different rates.

For example, consider for a moment 'Active learning' and the ability to understand and anticipate routines, for children with SEND this may include more overt environmental cues and strategies such as objects of reference but with these in place children with SEND will more readily understand and anticipate routines.

Self-regulation and executive function. These are aspects that children with SEND often find difficult, for example the ability to adapt to change, or the feelings of strong emotions that overwhelm them which are difficult to bounce back from.

The 7C's of resilience (competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control)
Resilience is key when learning. Each of the Cs play a vital role in promoting independent effective learning. There is overlap between many of the Cs and strands within the themes and can be an essential part of professional discussion.

Leuven signs of engagement
The extent to which the child is engaged in the environment, the resources on offer or the adult interactions available to them can be key when considering the learning needs of the individual. The extent to which the child can independently access their environment, how engaged or passive a child is and how much adult support and modelling is required to enable moments of engagement will be of consideration when discussing learning, moments of celebration and progress of children will complex SEND.

Graduated response

The SEND Code of Practice requires that schools and settings support the individual needs of children through a graduated response. In order to support settings and schools to do this Derbyshire's response has been to create a menu of optional resources which reflects the 3 levels of the SEND graduated response. Universal, targeted and specialist levels.

As the child moves through the assess, plan, do, review model of the graduated response they may also move through these various levels of support.
Universal being that which is available to all children and usually needs are met through differentiation or small group work.
Targeted level builds on the observational evidence of the child's progress and requires more intervention targeted to the individual child. Learning outcomes reflect specific objectives for the child based on developmental profiling.
Specialist levels usually means the support of external agencies and support services. It can also mean additional funding or an EHCP.

This menu of support will be available to all providers and is also part of the new 'Derbyshire approach to the Graduated response'

Measuring progress at targeted level is often the gateway to higher levels of support. At targeted level we have used what we know about supporting children with complex SEND to expand the EYFS checkpoints into celebratory checkpoints. These reflect the emphasis of the responsibility for progress on the adult by asking questions. It is not a skill-based list to be ticked off.

By asking questions as part of the progress discussion, parents and professionals will be able to celebrate success and agree new outcomes as part of the assess, plan, do, review model.

How to use the Celebratory Checkpoints

The celebratory checkpoints have been devised by the Derbyshire Early Years SEN team for use with young children who have significant cognitive difficulties.

The celebratory checkpoints have been developed with the following documentation in mind:
- Revised EYFS
- Development matters
- Derbyshire small steps prime areas overview
- Derbyshire small steps prime and specific documentation
- Celebratory approach
- SEND Code of Practice

The celebratory checkpoints are intended to support ongoing observation and assessment by asking questions of what may be seen within the prime areas. They can also be used to access support services and additional resources by answering the questions with the child's narrative.

The **celebratory checkpoints are not a tick list** to be worked through but are a springboard for discussion between parents and professionals.

Within each of the prime areas within pathway birth to 3 you will note 3 different icons

Communication and language	Personal social and emotional development	Physical development

Here we have the PSED example which demonstrates how the celebratory checkpoints have been expanded to give greater breadth to the professional discussion. Development matters checkpoints are in blue.

The Derbyshire Early Years SEN Service - Celebratory Checkpoints. Birth to 3

When considering to what extent these aspects of development are being observed and supported, we should always have in mind the aspects of foundational learning that accompany and underpin the play and interaction we see.

Executive function includes the child's ability to, hold information in mind, focus their attention, think flexibly, inhibit impulsive behaviour. These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to **self-regulate**, concentrate their thinking, plan what to do next, monitor what they are doing and adapt, regulate strong feelings, be patient for what they want and bounce back when things get difficult. **Language development** is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

The 7 C's of resilience.	Personal Social and Emotional Development Small Step Celebratory Checkpoints *(including DM checkpoints)*	Foundational skills Characteristics of Effective Learning
Competence I can achieve and make progress, **Confidence I** have a go and keep on trying **Connection I** feel safe and secure in my relationships; I know who will support me and who I can ask for help **Character I** have a unique personality, interests, and strengths **Contribution I** make a difference to	Is the child comforted by touch, people's faces and voices, can they be soothed with a cuddle, stop crying when picked up or smile in response to touch and sound, seeking contact with others? Does the child, laugh and gurgle, smiles, and makes sound in response to eye contact or follow a moving object with interest? Does the child suck on hands or clothes to pacify or self-calm, cry if adult attention ends, show distress at being left alone or wary of unfamiliar events? *At around 7 months, does the baby respond to their name and respond to the emotions in your voice?* Does the child respond differently to familiar voices than unfamiliar voices, or smile more often to familiar rather than unfamiliar people? Does the child show anticipation of routines when many cues are given e.g. flannel moving towards face or the smell and sound of dinner preparation? Does the child attend to two people at once and scan between them? Does the child show a range of emotions such as pleasure fear and excitement, enjoy peek a boo game? Does the child show an awareness of being imitated, respond to a mirror by smiling and moving or follow the gaze of an adult? Does the child use voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention, are they affectionate giving hugs and kisses? Does the child hand an object to an *adult to request or continue more of a turn taking response or initiate turn taking interaction?*	**Playing and exploring** – I realise that my actions have, an effect on the world, so I repeat them. I reach for and accept objects, making choices and exploring different resources and materials. I plan and think ahead about how to explore or play with objects. I guide my own thinking and actions by talking to myself while playing. I make independent choices and do things independently that I have been previously taught. I can collaborate and learn alongside my peers.

It is important to note that not all of these questions need to be answered as part of the progress discussion, use your knowledge of the child to start with questions which reflect opportunities for celebration but also where you have begun to identify that 'different from and additional to' is required to help the child demonstrate the confidence to independently succeed in answering these questions.

Where the child has been identified as requiring 'different from and additional to' and through the professional discussion during cycles of assess, plan, do, review, it may be agreed that further resources are required to support the child. This could include referral for Early Years Inclusion Funding. The checkpoints can be used to support this referral.

By taking the questions identified and adding narrative within the referral form (see example taken from the EYIF sample application below) it is possible to describe barriers to learning and the additional support provided within setting as part of the graduated response.

Personal, social and emotional development:

Between the ages of two and three does the child start to enjoy the company of others and want to play with them?

Does the child take a toy to a familiar adult for them to make it work, enjoy sharing new experiences with a range of adults and begin to copy actions in play activities with adults, occasionally sharing resources?

Billy seems happy to be in Nursery and does not become distressed when separating from parents. He will engage with staff in peek a boo games and enjoys a game where he runs to an adult to be picked up and swung round.
Billy plays alongside other children and does not appear to notice them unless they have a toy he

wants. He will then snatch and become very distressed if he can't have the toy.
Billy will sometimes cry, throw himself on the floor and bang his head against any available surface for no clearly apparent reason taking a long time to calm down. We have found that giving him a soft blanket and cushion helps him calm down sooner.

This narrative does not need to be provided for all questions.

Please note that the checkpoints are available free to all Derbyshire settings as PDF documents from the local offer. As PDF documents you can either use the print screen function and crop to the questions you require or use a snipping tool to snip and paste the questions you have chosen to answer.

There are several ways to do this, here are just a few as examples:
How do I snip part of a PDF?
The Snapshot tool copies an area as an image that you can paste into other applications.
Choose **Edit > Take A Snapshot**. Drag a rectangle around the area you want to copy, and then release the mouse button

How to use the Snipping Tool
    1. Free-form snip. Draw a free-form shape around an object.
    2. Rectangular snip. Drag the cursor around an object to form a rectangle.
    3. Window snip. Select a window, such as a browser window or dialog box, that you want to capture.
    4. Full-screen snip. Capture the entire screen.

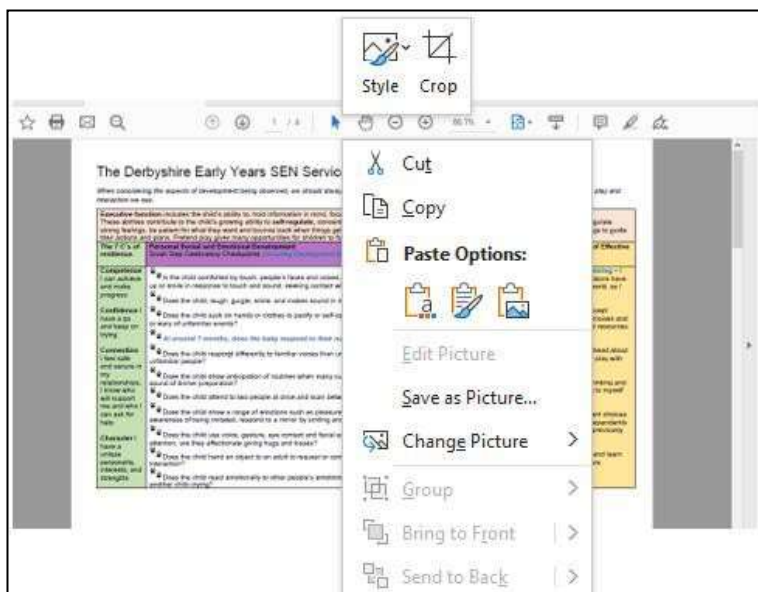**How to Crop a Screen Shot**
    Press "Print Screen" to capture a screen shot. ...
    Press "Ctrl-V" to paste the captured image into the work area.
    Right click for options and click 'crop'
    Or
    choose picture format from the tool bar and choose crop.

The foundational learning themes can also be used to include the voice of the child. This is taken from the example Early Years Inclusion Fund applictaion.

Foundational learning

I have a unique personality, interests, and strengths. Although I am beginning to develop self-regulation strategies, I still need a lot of support. I am secure in the relationship with my family but only key workers in nursery. I will persevere when playing with my favourite toys but struggle to keep patient in unfamiliar activities. Although I enjoy cause and effect toys, I have little understanding of how my reactions affect others. I need support to make choices, struggle to predict what may happen in play and continue to need a lot of reassurance both verbally and with visual supports.
I engage in my favoured activities but very much on my terms and do not like sharing my toys.

Conclusion

The celebratory checkpoints were devised by the Derbyshire Early Years Special Educational Needs team for use with young children at a targeted level of the graduated response. They are not a highlighted tick list. The intention is that through the additional questions to answer parents and professionals will have opportunity to share and celebrate the strengths of an individual child and also reflect on the barriers to learning and set agreed short-term outcomes and seek additional support as appropriate.

The Derbyshire EYSEN team share this document with you as one possible option for use when supporting a child's individual needs through the graduated response, and as evidence for additional resources.